Lewis Carroll's Artistic Eye

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Abstract

John Tenniel's illustrations for both *Alice* books are almost inseparable from the text, but less well appreciated is the partnership between artist and author that brought them into creation. Charles L. Dodgson (Lewis Carroll) was not only the writer but also the man who commissioned Tenniel to draw the pictures and eventually paid for them. Dodgson chose the subjects, the sizes and shapes of the illustrations, and where they would fit within his text. Tenniel's skilful draughtsmanship was guided by Dodgson's artistic eye. Dodgson adopted the same approach with his other four main illustrators; Henry Holiday (*Snark*), Arthur B. Frost (*Rhyme? And Reason?* and *A Tangled Tale*), Harry Furniss (*Sylvie and Bruno* books), and E. Gertrude Thomson *(Three Sunsets*). In all cases, Dodgson as commissioner and purchaser of the illustrations exercised the main role. He knew what illustrations were needed for his text, and he shared his artistic imagination with his artists using their skill and experience as book illustrators to satisfy his requirements. This paper explores Dodgson's own artistic skills, and his productive, although sometimes strained, relationships with his illustrators.

We praise artists such as John Tenniel, Henry Holiday, Arthur Frost, Harry Furniss and Gertrude Thomson for illustrating in such a fine way the books of Lewis Carroll (henceforth called by his real name, Charles L.

Dodgson). Many people find that Tenniel's pictures for the *Alice* books are inseparable from the text – so well do they illustrate Dodgson's narrative account of little Alice and her adventures in a strange and wonderful land. Holiday's pictures for *The Hunting of the Snark* are crammed full of detail leaving the viewer with much to enjoy and discover. We marvel at Frost's drawings for the humorous poems – his astonishing comic illustrations for "Phantasmagoria" and his very amusing caricatures of the family in "Hiawatha's Photographing." We admire the draughtsmanship of Furniss in the *Sylvie and Bruno* books – some people even say that the illustrations are better than the book! I'm not one of them. We find Gertrude Thomson's little cherubs in the *Three Sunsets* absolutely charming even if somewhat incongruous for the text of the poems. But who should claim the praise for such magnificent illustrative ideas – the artist? or the author?

One thing is for sure – Dodgson had a substantial hand in deciding the subjects and themes for the illustrations in his books. The artist was commissioned to draw for Dodgson. The upper hand lay with the author. The artist was paid for his or her services in carrying out the commission, and, as such, had no real role in deciding what to draw. In Dodgson's case he either controlled the pictures thoroughly or he gave some leeway to his artist. To some extent, this depended upon his confidence in the illustrator, and, if suitable trust had been achieved, the artist was given more freedom to suggest the composition of a picture.

How do we know the level of control exercised by Dodgson over his illustrators? Well there are sufficient entries in his *Diaries* to tell us how the collaboration proceeded – long and often frequent meetings to discuss the pictures.[1] Then we have the illustration plans set out by Dodgson for some books, notably *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. And further compelling evidence comes from the letters that passed between the author and artist throughout the commissions. These letters reveal that in virtually all cases, Dodgson had in his mind's eye exactly what was required to illustrate his work. Many times he provided his artist with his own drawings, some mere sketches, but others more detailed in their content and composition. Usually, the artist just

copied Dodgson's idea.[2]

Let us step back in time and look at Dodgson's artistic abilities. How good an artist was he? How effective was his artistic eye when it came to suggesting an idea for an illustration? Throughout his life, it seems, he deprecated his own ability to draw, but was this justified? We know that he consulted professional artists and critics such as John Ruskin whose judgement he trusted. Collingwood tells us that Dodgson's "own drawings were in no way remarkable. Ruskin, whose advice he took on his artistic capabilities, told him that he had not enough talent to make it worth his while to devote much time to sketching…." The source of this remark has not come to light.[3]

When Dodgson was anticipating illustrating *Alice's Adventures* with his own pictures, he went as far as drawing some onto wood to be engraved. His diary entry for 16 July 1863 relates his crushing blow: "Called on Mr. Combe with my first drawing on wood. Mr. Woolner was there, just beginning a bust of Mr. Combe. He looked at the drawing (a half length of the heroine) and condemned the arms, which he says I must draw from the life." With the opinions of two heavyweights in the field of Victorian art, it is no wonder that Dodgson's confidence was shaken. Thomas Woolner's comment was to have a lasting effect on Dodgson – he always preferred his artists (apart from Tenniel who was unwilling) to work from life, using models whenever possible.

A few days after meeting Woolner he noted: "Called on Mr. Jewitt, in Camden Town, who is to do the wood-cutting for my book, and got some hints on the subject. He is going to cut the blocks I have drawn, improving on it a little." Over the next few months, he rubs shoulders with some of the most important living artists of his day, Alexander Munro, Arthur Hughes, Alphonse Legros, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Whether they influenced his decision, we will never know, but by the end of 1863 he was seeking a letter of introduction from Tom Taylor, staff officer at *Punch*, to their main illustrator, John Tenniel, in order to ask ***him*** if he would illustrate *Alice's Adventures*. In his note to Taylor, Dodgson wrote: "I have tried my hand at drawing on the wood, and come to the conclusion that it

would take much more time than I can afford, and that the result would not be satisfactory after all."[4]

As we know, Tenniel accepted the commission. Much has been written about the working relationship between Dodgson and Tenniel, and contrary to many previous biographers, the evidence suggests no major difficulty between the two men working together on both books – Tenniel had other work and was frequently slow in producing the pictures. The illustration plans show how meticulous they were in arranging the illustrations. There were problems in getting the illustrations completed for *Looking-Glass*. After an initial refusal probably due to overwork and a family bereavement, Tenniel finally accepted the commission in 1869, but was slow getting started. Just before Dodgson paid him a visit on 20 January 1870 to talk about progress, Tenniel wrote to George Dalziel, the engraver:

> Dear Dalziel,
>
> Are you disposed to undertake the engravings of another little book for Mr. Dodgson? It is a continuation of "Alice's Adventures" and I am going to work upon it at once.
>
> One line please to say "*Yes*" – and I'll let you know the size of blocks etc.
>
> In much haste.
>
> Yours very truly,
>
> J. Tenniel
>
> All good wishes for the New Year !!!

This letter from Tenniel to Dalziel is dated 11 January 1870.[5]

Allow me a brief aside to rectify an erroneous myth that surfaces from time to time about Tenniel's supposed model for Alice. This suggests that a girl Dodgson met at Ripon, Mary Hilton Badcock, was the model. We know that Dodgson purchased of a photograph of Miss Badcock, and when Sidney Herbert Williams and Falconer Madan were preparing their *Handbook of the Literature of the Rev. C. L. Dodgson*, they included the following statement:

> It appears that in 1864 Dodgson was casting about for a face and figure for Tenniel's pencil, and that he 'fell in love' with a photograph of Miss Badcock seen at 'Mr. Gray's of Sharow.' In January 1865 he obtained

> Canon Badcock's leave to purchase a copy of the photograph of his daughter, and recommended it to Tenniel, who subsequently paid visits to the Canon at Ripon and adopted the suggestion.

Williams and Madan reproduce the photograph of Mary Badcock (opp. p. 22), but add a footnote stating that: "the dates suggest that Tenniel's first sketches were independent of the photograph referred to…"

In fact the dates totally rule out the possibility of Tenniel ever using the face and figure of Mary Badcock for "Alice." Dodgson's introduction to Tenniel was on 25 January 1864 (a whole year earlier), and he accepted the commission on 5 April 1864. Although Dodgson did not see any drawings for the book until 12 October, Tenniel already had his image of Alice clearly marked out. The title page for the June issue of *Punch* drawn by Tenniel shows his prototype for "Alice." Everyone will recognise that this is the image of "Alice" used henceforth by Tenniel (see Fig. 1). On 12 October 1864 Dodgson saw Tenniel's first drawing of "Alice and the Pool of Tears." The image of Alice used is this illustration became the consistent image used in all subsequent pictures depicting Alice in both *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*. And this is well before Mary Hilton Badcock came on the scene.

At the University of Texas at Austin there are a number of letters concerning Dodgson's acquisition of the photograph of Mary Hilton Badcock – letters that passed between Dodgson and Canon Badcock – but nowhere is to be found the suggestion that Dodgson wanted it for the purposes suggested by the myth. Surely, if that *was* his purpose, he would have used the opportunity to get sanction from Canon Badcock. In addition, we know that Tenniel did *not* work from models. In a letter dated 31 March 1892 from Dodgson to Gertrude Thomson, he says: "Mr. Tenniel is the only artist, who has drawn for me, who resolutely refused to use a model, and declared he no more needed one than I should need a multiplication-table to work a mathematical problem!"[6] So that, I hope, clears up a mistake that has gone on long enough.

Tenniel used his imagination and good photographic memory for his artistic work. Whenever he wanted an image of a precocious little girl,

"Alice" was the figure he drew. For example, an illustration entitled "Hoity-Toity!!" appeared in the pages of *Punch* for 1 February 1868. The figure is unmistakeably "Alice" (see Fig. 2). Tenniel, it seems, did not have a repertoire of different figures – he used the same idea over and over again. There are many other examples of "Alice" appearing in his drawings for *Punch*.

Getting back to the main point, let us pursue Dodgson's own artistic abilities. There are many drawings executed by Dodgson that exist going right back to his childhood. From these, we can see a definite skill in drawing humorous sketches and drawings to illustrate poems and stories. The earliest to survive where drawn in the Dodgson family magazine, *Useful and Instructive Poetry*, composed around 1845 when Dodgson was a boy of 13 years for a younger brother and sister.

Now, I'm no art expert, but this picture (see Fig. 3) seems very competent to me. The proportions of the figure look right to my eye, and there is accurate use of perspective. Dodgson does not make it easy for himself when he shows the figure with legs crossed. There is clear evidence of early artistic talent that would probably improve with nurture and encouragement.

Here are two very early illustrations, also from *Useful and Instructive Poetry*, that Dodgson drew to illustrate his poem "Clara." It's a long poem, so I will just take two extracts from the verses that fit the two pictures I have selected to demonstrate his illustrative abilities when in his early teens. Countess Clara awaits the return of her husband (see Fig. 4):

Solemnly sighing,
  Like one a dying,
The countess Clara on her pillow lay:
  Along the pillow white,
  Through the drear, drear night
Her golden ringlets thickly cluster,
"Woe's me, woe's me!"
Thus did she sadly say,
"My punishment is just; what can be juster?

'Yet am I wretched and in misery.
'Why hath he left me here alone?
'Why doth he thus delay his coming?
'I hear no sound but the fitful drone,
'Of the beetle idly humming.
'I live in woe and hopeless love,
'And gaze on the lovely moon above.

(See Fig. 5):

'Through distant lands of pleasantness
'A region of despair,
'I wander on in weariness
'And madly tear my hair.
'Is it not so? do not I hear his voice
'Ah me! my heart, rejoice!
'Woe! woe! woe! woe!
'My brain it reels, my heart is all on fire,
'As curls the smoke from yonder village spire!

Her husband arrives, but instead of greeting his wife, he promptly gets drunk. This is somewhat of an amazing invention for a 13-year-old boy.

As a storyteller, he probably had images in his mind that helped him describe the scenario of his tales. He wrote in a pictorial style – the reader is able to imagine the setting, the characters and the events. Several of his child-friends reminisced that Dodgson often made small sketches as he told a story, and a few examples of his storyboard drawings survive. Here is an example from the last of the family magazines, *Mischmasch*, showing a more developed style revealing competent draughtsmanship and an eye for comic situations (see Fig. 6). Dodgson was probably in his twenties when he compiled this magazine. The page is entitled "From Our Own Correspondent" and parodies a reporter's description of people attending an important civic function:

"One of the earliest arrivals was a gentleman of unquestionable 'ton' {tone}; the lady who accompanied him excited considerable attention,

on entering the room, by her exquisite muslin skirt and slip."

Dodgson was thirty when he added his drawings to the manuscript of *Alice's Adventures under Ground*. We know that he went to an immense amount of trouble to get these pictures right. There are practice drawings in the archives at Christ Church Library. We know he consulted books on natural history to be certain that the animals in the story looked realistic. When it came to mythical creatures, he let his mind run riot. He left spaces for the pictures until he had mastered the image, copying them in when finally ready. By this time, Dodgson understood the art of illustrating a story, spacing the pictures throughout the text to maintain interest, and providing a visual context for the tale. The illustrations were well chosen. Tenniel used many of the same subjects – probably at Dodgson's suggestion. Many years later, when Dodgson contemplated a facsimile of the manuscript being published, it was the pictures that gave him some concern. In a letter to Alice Hargreaves dated 1 March 1885 he wrote:

> I would be much obliged if you would lend it me (registered post I should think would be safest) that I may consider the possibilities. I have not seen it for about 20 years: so am by no means sure that the illustrations may not prove to be so awfully bad, that to reproduce them would be absurd.[7]

Of course, he needed to have no concern about the illustrations. They may be quaint, amateurish, and lacking in the draughtsmanship of professional artists, but they nevertheless convey the fantasy image of Wonderland that he had conceived, probably at the time of telling the story, but certainly as he constructed the book he was to give to Alice Liddell as an early Christmas gift in 1864.

Illustrations are an integral part of many books, especially books for children, even more so today. Dodgson was shrewd enough to realise that a "top-name" illustrator would have a significant effect on the sales of his story, especially as *he* was a complete "unknown" as an author. Choosing Tenniel was a wise move. Tenniel was well known, and the book was noticed as a result. Some of the early reviews mention Tenniel but not the author. Tenniel's illustrations were a major contribution to the popularity

and success of both *Alice* books.

There are many instances when Dodgson gives his opinion of himself as an artist to his illustrators, as the letters to his illustrators will testify. To some extent, he was encouraging his illustrators in their work and reminding them of their role – a role he felt he was unable to undertake. Nevertheless, he was able to criticise their work with what Gertrude Thomson described as his "singularly correct eye for form." Dodgson once said to her:

> I can't draw in the least myself – that's the first qualification for an Art Critic. One approaches a subject in such a delightfully open and unbiased manner if you are entirely ignorant of it![8]

Of course, he was being modest when relating this. His ability to draw was better than he gave himself credit for.

Harry Furniss was the only one to mock Dodgson's self-deprecating view of himself as an artist, when, in reply to a letter in which Dodgson said: "I trust you won't think me *very* impertinent, for venturing to send a couple of scrawls to show my own ideas." Furniss replied sarcastically: "I had no idea you were an artist." Dodgson rebuked him by replying (April 24? 1885):

> I fear your words were, to a certain extent, 'rote sarkastic,' which is a shame! I never made any profession of being able to draw, and have only had, as yet, 4 hours' teaching (from a young friend, who is herself an artist, and who insisted on making me try, in black chalk, a foot of the Laocoön! The result was truly ghastly): but I have just sufficient of correct eye to see that every drawing I make, even from life, is altogether wrong anatomically: so that nearly all my attempts go into the fire as soon as they are finished.[9]

This seemed to put Furniss in his place; he did not mock Dodgson's artistic abilities from then on. The artist friend was, almost certainly, Gertrude Thomson. But Furniss never forgot the rebuke, and took every opportunity to seek revenge. At the time he was collaborating with Dodgson he published an article in *The Magazine of Art*. Entitled "The Illustrating of Books," it was published in 1891. In the article, Furniss provided useful advice to illustrators, advice he signally failed to take

himself. The article began:

> Just as every mouthful of food…should be bitten thirty times before it is swallowed, so most stories require reading over a certain number of times before the artist can digest the contents sufficiently for illustration, particularly if the author has not troubled to consider his creation from the artist's standpoint as well as his own.

Furniss went on to state:

> Undoubtedly there are some writers who take great trouble to see their subject from the artistic standpoint…. Many writers, on the other hand, show an extraordinary carelessness – or, shall I say, agility? …Two instances, among many similar experiences which have fallen to my lot, will serve to show my ground for making this observation. The authors' names, of course, I suppress; they are both leading novelists of to-day, and as both are as genial as they are eminent, I feel sure they will forgive me should this "meet their eye" and they recognise the circumstances.

This is naturally a bit rich coming from a man who frequently did not read Dodgson's text, causing Dodgson in some circumstances to change the text to suit the errant picture. We cannot be certain that Furniss had Dodgson in mind when writing this piece. He had, up to this time, illustrated a number of books by other authors, but at the time of writing this piece, Dodgson had been his sole author for at least three years. It would be easy for a reader to make the assumption that Lewis Carroll was one of the eminent leading novelists of the day. Furniss criticised the inconsistencies of authors. He also complained about author's own sketches and the difficulties they caused him. He may have had Dodgson in mind here. He gives by way of example the author's rough sketch of his ideal heroine. He then described an exaggerated method prescribed by the author for ensuring that the ideal was achieved. I have abbreviated the description a little:

> I soon receive my author's recipe for constructing the ideal heroine. I am not to take *one* model for the lady – I am to take *several*; for all know no face is perfect. I am therefore to go to Hastings and see a

> certain Miss Matilda Smith, in a pastrycook's shop, for the eyes.... Then to Dublin there is a Miss O'Grady, "with oh, such a perfect nose!" A letter of introduction is enclosed, and am enjoined that I "must not mind her squint." For the ears, a journey to Scarboro', to see Miss Robinson, the Vicar's daughter, is recommended. The mouth I shall find in Manchester – not an English mouth, but a sweet Spaniard's, Senora Nicolomino, the daughter of a merchant there. For the hair I must go to Brighton; for the figure to a number of different places. My author had mapped out a complete tour for me.

Furniss supplied his own invention of the author's rough sketch for his ideal heroine (see Fig. 7). The article, of course, was meant to be humorous, but there is always a biting sense of irony in whatever Furniss wrote, and I would not be surprised if he had Dodgson in mind when writing this section of a scurrilous article that ought to have deterred his future authors. We do know that Dodgson was concerned about the illustration of his two main characters, Sylvie and Bruno, and Furniss's ability to capture the image Dodgson had imagined for them. He sent Furniss various photographs of children that matched up to his ideals. Furniss, we also know, ignored these photographs and used his own children as the models.

Many years later, when Dodgson was no longer around to take him to task, Furniss took another sideswipe at Dodgson. This extract comes from Furniss's book, *Some Victorian Men*, published in 1924, the year before Furniss died.

> The unconscious humour of the author's idea for pathetic pictures was a great relief to my difficult task of satisfying such a captious critic. Delightful and interesting as Carroll the author was, he unfortunately proved less acceptable when in the form of Dodgson the critic. He subjected every illustration, when finished, to a minute examination under a magnifying glass. His practice was to take a square inch of the drawing, count the lines I had made in that space, and compare their number with those on a square inch of illustration made for *Alice* by Tenniel! And in due course I would receive a long essay on the subject

from Dodgson the mathematician.

The existing correspondence between Dodgson and Furniss reveals that this comment is far from the truth. Dodgson's criticism was directed towards the draft drawings made by Furniss in an attempt to get him to fit the pictures to the text, to maintain some semblance of continuity in the proportions of the illustrated characters, and to fit with the image Dodgson had valiantly tried to describe for Furniss at meetings and in letters. Furniss continued:

> Lewis Carroll began…by illustrating his own writings…. But as a draughtsman he was, as he himself admitted, hopeless, although he took himself so seriously as to consult Ruskin.

Dodgson was conciliatory and fair in all his dealings with Furniss when it came to the illustrations. Dodgson was patient with an egocentric man with a temperament that was poles apart from his own. Fortunately, the results were good. Furniss probably produced some of his best work for *Sylvie and Bruno*, and Dodgson must take some of the credit for encouraging this.

Let us take an example of Dodgson describing his mind's eye to one of his illustrators. This comes from a letter to Arthur Burdett Frost dated 5 April 1881. Frost was preparing the illustrations for Dodgson's poem, "Phantasmagoria."

> Dear Mr. Frost,
>
> It is difficult to find words which will express, as strongly as I wish, how *thoroughly* I admire your pictures to the ghost-poem. They really are *wonderful*. I sent on all the blocks the same day to Messrs. Dalziel, that they may put the cutting of them in hand at once. Those on paper I will send on very soon (with the exception of the one which I am returning to you), but there is no hurry, as he will have his hands quite full for some time to come….
>
> The enclosed picture is the solitary exception to the collection you have sent: and I candidly admit I do *not* like the man in it. I will try to put my reasons into an intelligible form. He is to my mind too *real* in his anger to be funny. If you were illustrating *Oliver Twist*, such a man would be quite in character for "Bill Sykes murdering Nancy." And the

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig.7

Fig. 8

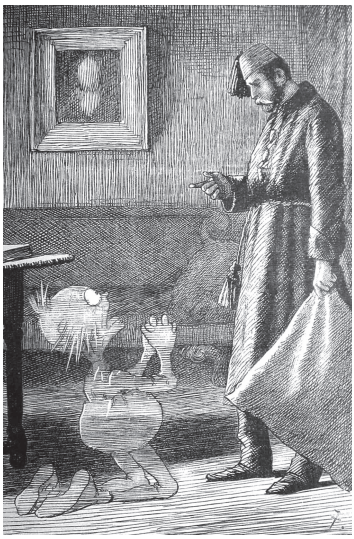

Fig. 9

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

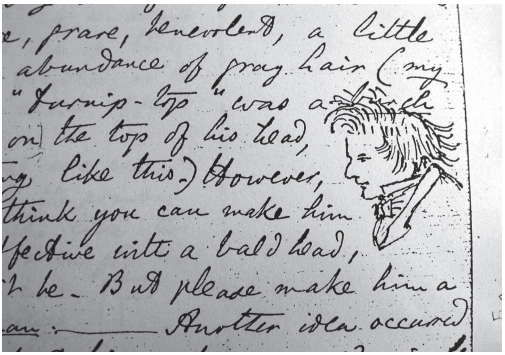

Fig. 12

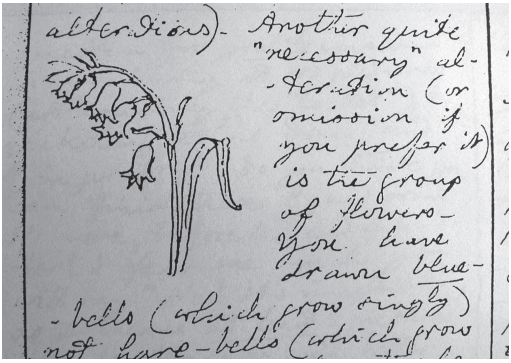

Fig. 13

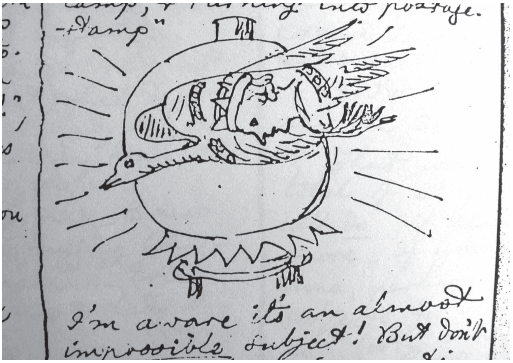

Fig. 14

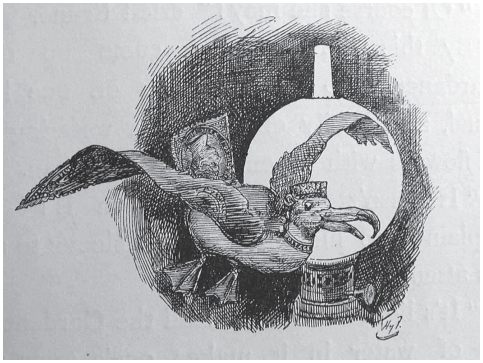

Fig. 15

Fig. 16

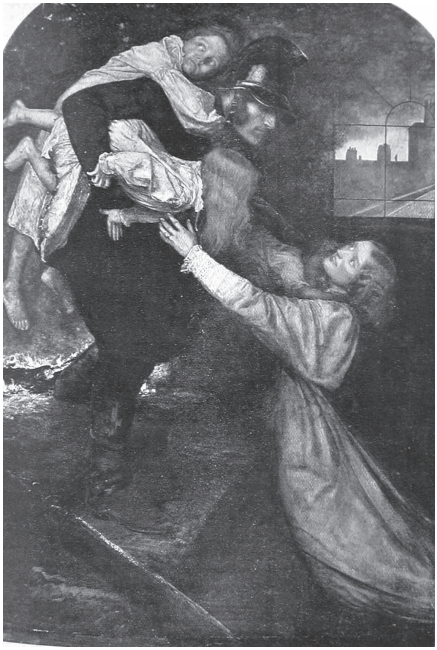

Fig. 17

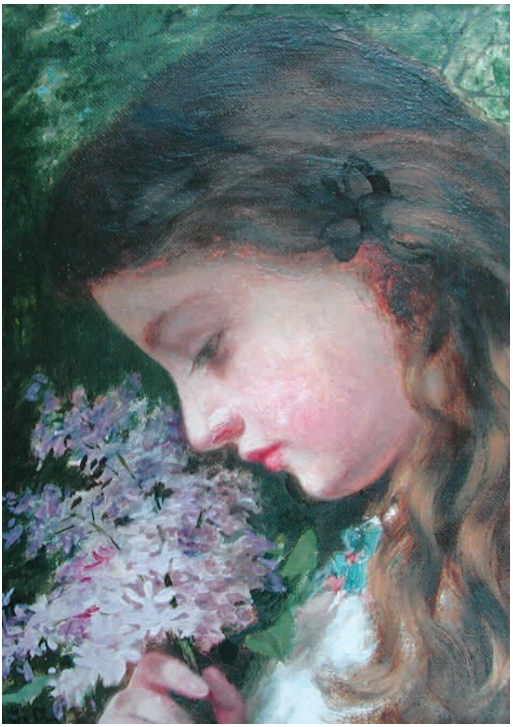

Fig. 18

Fig. 19

Fig. 20

warming-pan (taken in connection with his savage expression) is too really murderous a weapon. The little ghost begging for mercy is perfectly charming, but the man has "murder" written in his face, and would terrify young readers more than amuse them. Also I don't think his night-shirt (though of course quite proper) is at all an artistic costume. I think a flowery dressing-gown would do much better. I think he ought to be a gentle man who has been terrified and worried into unusual violence, which should be preposterous and burlesque: also I think a pillow or bolster would be more hopelessly useless for exterminating ghosts, and therefore more comic than a warming-pan, which would really be a very deadly weapon. I can't draw, myself (a remark which the enclosed sketch makes quite superfluous), but this will perhaps give you a better idea, than words alone would, of what I have in my head. I hope you will be able to patch the drawing with a bit of paper, so as to save the trouble of drawing a new ghost.[10]

Frost's revised drawing lacks some of the comic effect evident in Dodgson's sketch (see Fig. 8). Nevertheless, he takes on board nearly all the suggestions that Dodgson made; the cushion instead of the warming-pan, the dressing-gown instead of the night-shirt (although it's plain not flowery), and the demeanour of the man is gentlemanly and kindly rather than angry and murderous (see Fig. 9). Unfortunately, we do not have the original rejected picture to make a complete comparison.

Here is another example of Dodgson describing what he has in mind for an illustration. This is part of Dodgson's letter to Furniss for the illustration of the "Three Badgers" in *Sylvie and Bruno*:

Dear Mr. Furniss,

I return your sketches for the "3 Badgers."

As to No. 1, my idea was that the truant Herrings had *left* the water, and gave their undesired serenade some way *inland*. Don't you think they might be made suggestive of lady-singers at a Concert? Then, would it not be more effective to make them of 3 quite different sizes? And ditto for the Badgers, who will thus make a more artistic group. My notion of the "mossy stone" is that it should not be larger than

> needed to make the *eldest* Badger comfortable, and the other two should be slipping off, and held up by their chins, nearly choked, and in much discomfort. This I think gives a funny turn to the fact that the Herrings were "longing to share that mossy seat"!…
>
> You will not need to be told that *I can't draw badgers*!
>
> Now, having put my ideas before you, I leave you free to draw the picture as seems to you best and funniest….[11]

I think this makes the point that Dodgson knew exactly what he wanted, and it was probably a good idea if his illustrator took a lead from Dodgson's preliminary sketches (see Fig. 10). Furniss virtually copies Dodgson's sketch in this instance, with added technical expertise, but lacking some of the original humour in my opinion (see Fig. 11).

Quite often, Dodgson would draw small preliminary sketches in the margins of letters to help explain his conception of a picture. Let me take an example. This comes from a letter to Frost in which Dodgson described the chief character in "Phantasmagoria" – a man haunted by a ghost (see Fig. 12). Unfortunately, we don't have Frost's preliminary drawing. Dodgson wrote:

> The former is not my idea. I think the "stoutish city man" would vulgarise the poem. I don't like his stoutness (when so displayed), nor his tail-coat, nor his course features, nor his bald head. I want him to be a thorough *gentleman*, of the old school. My idea of his face is a rather long face, grave, benevolent, a little weak: abundance of gray hair (*my* idea of "turnip-top" was a bunch of hair on the top of his head, something like this).[12]

To my view, this is a very competent sketch and shows exactly what Dodgson had in mind.

There were times when a marginal sketch was included to ensure accuracy. In this example (see Fig. 13), Dodgson was explaining to Furniss the difference between a blue-bell and a hare-bell – clearly something he didn't know. Dodgson wrote:

> Another quite "necessary" alteration…is the group of flowers. You have drawn *blue*-bells (which grow singly) not *hare*-bells (which grow 5

> or 6 together, along the lower side of a single stalk)…. Your blue-bells are very pretty, but, if you look at the text, you'll see they don't suit it. Bruno can't run his hand along them, like a row of bells, unless he has a lot, close together, on one stalk.[13]

Another small sketch was sent by Dodgson to Furniss for one of the verses of the "Mad Gardener's Song" (see Fig. 14). Dodgson wrote:

> I suggest "Albatross fluttering round lamp, and turning into postage-stamp." I'm aware it's an almost *impossible* subject! But don't you think there is a certain zest in trying impossibilities?[14]

Furniss succeeded (see Fig. 15). The verse is as follows:

> He thought he saw an Albatross
> That fluttered round the lamp:
> He looked again, and found it was
> A Penny-Postage-Stamp.
> "You'd best be getting home," he said:
> "The nights are very damp!"

There are times when Dodgson felt unable to provide even a preliminary sketch. This was often true when it came to drawing people, especially children. One gets the feeling that his image of children should not, in his mind, be tainted by a poor attempt at drawing them. We know he tried on many occasions to draw children, and some examples survive. From his earlier comment, it is likely that many attempts went into the fire. In one letter to Furniss he wrote: "I have tried a sketch, which I enclose: but really my sketches come out so wretchedly bad, that I must try to convey my meaning by *descriptions*."[15] In another letter to Furniss, dated 27 November 1886, he began by saying: "I have picked out what seem to me 4 subjects, suitable for pictures, in 'Bruno's Revenge': but I won't attempt to sketch them myself: my attempts at children are melancholy failures, and, as to the *grouping*, you will be a much better judge than I. So I will simply *describe* my idea of each…"[16] He goes on to give a detailed description of the pictures, for example, for "Sylvie and Beetle" he says: "It should be a large beetle, so as to be a fair job for Sylvie to roll it over: *her* I imagine 6 or 8 inches high, so that most flowers (buttercups, etc.) would overtop her.

Her *dress* I will discuss further on. This is a question of *great* importance, as Sylvie and Bruno are the chief characters in the book."

Dodgson went on to describe Furniss's illustration as "a quite charming composition." However, Furniss was not always careful about the proportionate differences between characters. His later illustration of "Sylvie with dead hare" made Sylvie a totally different size, and thus conflicted with the proportion previously shown. This almost resulted in a breakdown between the two men – Dodgson wanted accuracy and consistency in his illustrations; Furniss was slapdash and gave no real thought to proportion or consistency of composition.

We can be certain that Furniss did not like having to follow Dodgson's illustrative ideas and artistic mind's eye. He did not like following the instructions of others, and he cited his "artistic temperament" rather than his "egotism" as his excuse. Furniss wrote that Dodgson was the "most exacting of all authors." He was keen to follow in the footsteps of the revered Mr. Tenniel, and he was expecting to illustrate another "Alice" story, but, as he reported, "the character of the book was a bitter disappointment to me." Not a good start for the collaboration. In Furniss's book, *The Confessions of a Caricaturist*, written a few years after Dodgson's death, there is a sense that Furniss found the whole process wearisome. He stated that he "sent him drawings as they were finished, and each parcel brought back a budget of letter-writing, each page being carefully numbered." He reproduced an example of page 5 of the letter numbered 49,874 and went on to say, ironically, that he was "not sure if {he} received all the remaining 49,873 letters in the seven years" of their collaboration, suggesting that Dodgson's communications were, to some extent, unwelcome. He failed to realise that all of Dodgson's correspondence was sequentially numbered from 1861, not just letters to Furniss.

Frances Sarzano takes up these ideas in her biography of Tenniel, misled by the vengeful Furniss, and she quotes from *The Confessions of a Caricaturist*, stating that Dodgson "was condemned by nature to be an irritating patron." She described Dodgson as "saddled with a strong visual

imagination" and since he "lacked sufficient manual skill to transfer his images to paper" he "was forced to rely on other people's hands for the expression of his own vision."[17] To some extent, this is right, but to say that Dodgson was "saddled" with this talent is putting it rather negatively. She went on to say "he felt profound distress if they failed in an exact appreciation of what was clear to his inner eye, and mortification if they interposed an alien vision of their own. In the critical assessment of an artist's work, his mathematical genius was apt to intrude." This was far from the truth. One can almost hear Furniss sniggering from his grave. Sarzano almost suggests that being a mathematician rules out all artistic and creative discrimination – a dangerous assumption. Art is built upon mathematical principles of what is pleasing to the eye – golden section and perspective, to give but two such principles.

Since Dodgson knew what he wanted in terms of illustration, he was keen that his artists did not rush ahead and complete pictures until he had been afforded the opportunity of seeing them. He had good reason to request rough sketches before approving the ideas for finished drawings. His artists did not always appreciate the context of the illustrations he had in mind. In some cases, Furniss for example, the artist did not read Dodgson's text sufficiently carefully, causing great difficulties. Dodgson wanted to be sure that time and money was not wasted on drawings that he could not use. This is how he explained the situation to Frost (the letter is dated 25 November 1878):

> As to the pictures for my book, I do not remember now how much we settled with regard to what passages were to be illustrated, and how. Whatever we settled you can of course carry out, even to the finishing the drawings on the wood. In all other cases I think it would be much more satisfactory to let me see, by rough sketches and descriptions, what your ideas are, before going to much expense of time and trouble in elaborating them. For instance, in "Phantasmagoria" itself, it would be a grievous annoyance if you were to finish off several pictures including the "little ghost" and then find after all that our ideas were entirely at variance as to what that "little

> ghost" should look like! It is of course a tremendous drawback to the work that every question and answer that passes should cost us a month, but it can't be helped with an ocean between us. I shall be truly rejoiced when I hear that you find you can pay England another visit.[18]

Frost was living in Philadelphia and letters took many weeks to pass between the two men. This became one of the major disadvantages of employing the services of an American artist, and may have hastened the end of the partnership. The same condition of seeing rough sketches first applied to Furniss, but Dodgson did not make this a condition for Gertrude Thomson. This is because she provided illustrations that were not, in any way, connected with text or verse. Her drawings were incidental and decorative. However, Dodgson subjected her drawings to the same critical eye that he did with his other illustrators (see Fig. 16). Here is an example of his comments:

> *Two girls sailing in shell*. You have made their boat sail *stern-first*! However that is a trifle. Could the little girl's wrist be thinned? It is about the same diameter as her upper arm. And could your name be more *among* the waves? The proportion, between figures and accessories, is just what I want.

Turning back to Dodgson's comments on his own abilities to draw, we have a detailed account of his view of making nude studies. In a letter to Gertrude Thomson dated 16 July 1885, he wrote:

> The other day I had quite a new form of artistic treat. You remember those 2 little Henderson girls, whom I have so often photographed naked? …It is 3 or 4 years now since I have photographed – I have been too busy: but I borrowed their little sister (aged 5½) to *draw* as a nude model. (There was never time, in photographic days, to try *drawings*.) The 2 elder ones brought her, and I gave an hour to making 4 sketches, and a second hour (after dressing her up again) to showing the trio my albums, musical-boxes, etc. She *is* such a sweet little figure! If only you, or some other person who *can* draw, had been here! *Then* there would have been some result worth showing. I … did not like to tax the patience of so young a sitter any more…. Even this time

> she sat nearly 15 minutes, I think, for one of the drawings. The results were, I think, about 10 times as good as I ever draw out of my own head: but what good is it to multiply zero by 10? The mathematical result is zero![19]

The comments in this letter suggest that Dodgson saw photography as an alternative to drawing. There is a sense that Dodgson took up photography to satisfy his need for artistic creativity and aesthetic appreciation, knowing that drawing would never give him the satisfaction he sought. His photography was always closely allied to art – he saw himself as a photographic artist. He studied art at galleries in order to help him with composition and arrangements in his photography. It is certainly possible that his time spent at art galleries helped to develop his mind's eye.

A question that might cross your mind is "from where did Dodgson get his artistic inspiration?" We know that he regularly attended art galleries, and the studios of Victorian artists. He was a connoisseur of Victorian art, particularly the works of the Pre-Raphaelites, and saw many, many pictures throughout his life. He even commissioned some to be painted for him that hung in his rooms at Christ Church. Let me take just five examples of paintings and drawings that Dodgson saw and commented on to give some idea of what appealed to him. In each case, I will give Dodgson's own comment about the picture, the first being one of the earliest paintings that Dodgson ever saw in a gallery, dating to a visit to the Royal Academy in June 1855 (see Fig. 17):

> We first went over the Royal Academy exhibition where Millais' "Rescue" struck me as far the best picture there.

Secondly, William Dyce's painting of "Titian preparing to make his first essay in colouring."

> A highly poetical face, the whole picture is well conceived. I took it at first to be Pre-Raphaelite.

Dodgson saw William Dyce's picture in 1857. Then Arthur Hughes' "Music Party."

> First to the Royal Academy. I could find no pictures more beautiful than Arthur Hughes' "Music Party."

Fourthly, Sophie Anderson's "Girl with Lilac" (see Fig. 18).

> Paid another visit to the Royal Academy, then to the Andersons, where I saw several beautiful pictures, and gave Mr. Anderson some hints on the perspective of a picture of his, which will lead to his altering it a good deal. I bought a little picture by Mrs. Anderson, of a child's head in profile: the original was in the house, and was called into the room, a beautiful child about 12, Elizabeth Turnbull by name. I intend taking a photograph of her in the same attitude as the picture. (6 July 1865)

Finally, Edwin Longsden Long's "Anno Domini."

> Then took Theo to see Long's great picture, of the flight into Egypt, called *Anno Domini*; the Virgin and Child I thought inferior to the accessories - a long train of Egyptians etc.

Dodgson saw this picture by Edwin Longsden Long, entitled *Anno Domino*, but also known as "The Flight into Egypt," in May 1884, and again in March 1893, when he wrote:

> Then to Bond Street, to see Edwin Long's pictures. The best, I think, are "The Flight into Egypt," and a pair about Zeuxis painting a picture of Venus from six selected maidens.

These examples of paintings seen and admired by Dodgson, were, of necessity, highly selective, but they give some idea of the style of art that Dodgson appreciated. To a great extent, Dodgson conformed to the ideas of Victorian sentiment that pervaded art at this time.

As we know, Dodgson gave up photography in 1880, completely and entirely. His reason for doing so was the time and effort needed to get his studio ready for photography, and the time it took to take good photographs. This was more time than he could afford to spend, especially when commercial photographers were now commonplace in all major towns, and he could easily make use of their services when required. Photography had become a drudge, and so he ceased being an advocate of the black art. With more time on his hands after retirement from his mathematical lectureship two years later in 1882, Dodgson went back to the creative art of drawing, especially drawing from life. His association

with professional artists gave him access to models, and some of his contacts gave him the opportunity to draw nude studies of children. One such contact was with Mrs Ethel Bell, sister of Gertrude Chataway, who had married the journalist, later to become the manager of *The Times*, Charles Frederic Moberly Bell. They had several children, among them Iris and Cynthia, both of whom sat for Dodgson as child models.

Dodgson's models were usually young female children from well-to-do families. This example (see Fig. 19) is from the Jon Lindseth Collection, but the sitter is unknown, possibly either Iris or Cynthia Bell. There is certainly a greater level of competence in this drawing than in his earlier sketches. There is also a sense that Dodgson strove, with some earnestness, to create a pleasing image that was anatomically accurate. At the same time he was guided by Victorian principles of aesthetics – the model is entirely nude – a draped model would have been suggestive and unacceptable. His eye delighted in the immature figure of a female child. We know of no examples of nude studies drawn by Dodgson of mature women.

In a letter to Gertrude Thomson, dated 8 October 1893, he makes arrangements for her to be with him for a drawing session:

> I have arranged to arrive at the Bells' soon after 10½ next Saturday, to *try* to draw Iris and Cynthia. Could you conveniently come and draw also? The results of *my* efforts will, I expect, be "nil" : but, if *you* were also to make a sketch or two, the children would not feel, quite so keenly, that their trouble in "sitting" had been wasted.[20]

On 14 October, Dodgson wrote in his diary: "To town by the 8.30. Reached the Bells about 10½. Miss E. G. Thomson arrived soon afterwards, and, till past 12, she made, and I *tried* to make, sketches of Iris and Cynthia, who were very willing and very patient models, with lovely figures, and yet more lovely innocence. It purifies one even to see such purity."

The following letter to Gertrude Thomson is dated 23 June 1893:

> My dear Miss Thomson,
>
> I have *much* pleasure in sending you this cheque: and the sooner I

have to send another and the larger the amount, the better I shall be pleased! Your remarks on Art are most interesting, though I don't quite understand about fairies losing "grace," if too like human children. Of course I grant that to be like some *actual* child is to lose grace, because no living child is perfect in form: many causes have lowered the race from what God made it. But the *perfect* human form, free from these faults, is surely equally applicable to men, and fairies, and angels? Perhaps that is what you mean, that the Artist can imagine, and design, more perfect forms than we ever find in life?

Thanks for what you say of my taste for Art. I *love* the effort to draw: but I fail utterly to please even my own eye, though now and then I seem to get somewhere *near* a right line or two, when I have a live child to draw from. But I have no time left now for such things. In the next life, I do *hope* we shall not only *see* lovely forms, such as this world does not contain, but shall also be able to *draw* them.[21]

Gertrude Thomson, in her reminiscences of Dodgson, published in *The Gentlewoman* on 29 January and 5 February 1898, described him as:

…not only an admirable amateur photographer, but an enthusiastic sketcher of children, especially when they were "dressed in nothing," as he called it, and *apropos* of this, he once told me an amusing remark of one of Sir Noël Paton's children. They were very beautiful, and served their father as models in those two exquisite illustrations for Kingsley's *Water Babies*. In the design of the fairies floating through the water the front view figure is an absolute portrait of one little daughter. One day a friend in looking at it said to the child, "Why, that's *you*." "Yes," was the reply, "it's *me*, but I don't *often* dress like that!"

I consider that he naturally had a decided gift for drawing, but he was entirely untrained, so that his sketches, though they had a certain feeling for beauty, were, of course, very crude….

Finally, another life-drawing, this time a child on the beach at Eastbourne (see Fig. 20). This is a seaside sketch of Louie Waddy dated 23 July 1877. She was the daughter of Samuel Danks Waddy, a barrister, and

his wife, Emma. This coloured sketch is in the Jon Lindseth Collection. The picture shows Dodgson's ability to execute an exterior drawing, probably taking no more than 20 minutes, and then to finish and colour it back in his rooms. Dodgson's competence in using colour is also revealed, but we must remember that he used water-colour from the earliest sketches in the family magazines – he was not a novice when it came to colouring his drawings.

To conclude – Dodgson was probably right to use the professional artists of his day. Their work helped to bring his books to the public's attention, especially the two *Alice* books illustrated by Tenniel. But his ability to convey ideas to his illustrators using his own artistic mind's eye greatly benefited the illustrated books he produced.

This previously unpublished paper is based on a talk given at a meeting of the Lewis Carroll Society of North America in October 2003 to launch the book, *Lewis Carroll and His Illustrators*, edited by Morton N. Cohen and Edward Wakeling (Cornell University Press, 2003).

Illustrations:

Fig. 1. Title-page from *Punch* (June 1864) – Alice prototype

Fig. 2. "Hoity-Toity!!" from *Punch* in 1868 – figure of Alice re-used by Tenniel

Fig. 3. Illustration from "Rules and Regulations" – an early sketch by Dodgson

Fig. 4. Illustration from *Useful and Instructive Poetry* – "Clara"

Fig. 5. Illustration from *Useful and Instructive Poetry* – "Clara"

Fig. 6. Illustration from *Mischmasch*

Fig. 7. Furniss's suggestion for "The Author's 'rough sketch' for his heroine"

Fig. 8. Dodgson's sketch for "Phantasmagoria"
Fig. 9. Frost's finished drawing for "Phantasmagoria"
Fig. 10. Dodgson's preliminary sketch for "The 3 Badgers"
Fig. 11. Furniss's final drawing for the "Three Badgers"
Fig. 12. Dodgson's sketch for "Turnip-head"
Fig. 13. Dodgson's drawing of a "Hare-bell"
Fig. 14. Dodgson's drawing of "Albatross and postage-stamp"
Fig. 15. Furniss's drawing for the "Albatross" verse
Fig. 16. Thomson's illustration for "two girls sailing in a shell" from *Three Sunsets*
Fig. 17. John Everett Millais' "Rescue"
Fig. 18. Sophie Anderson's "Girl with Lilac"
Fig. 19. An example of Dodgson's nude studies
Fig. 20. Dodgson's drawing of Louie Waddy

1 *Lewis Carroll's Diaries* edited by Edward Wakeling (Lewis Carroll Society, 10 volumes, 1993-2007) – references given by date.
2 Dodgson's surviving correspondence with his illustrators is published in *Lewis Carroll and His Illustrators* edited by Morton N. Cohen and Edward Wakeling (Cornell University Press in the US, Macmillan in the UK, 2003), henceforth called *Illustrators*.
3 *The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll* by Stuart Dodgson Collingwood (T. Fisher Unwin, 1898, p. 102).
4 *The Letters of Lewis Carroll* edited by Morton N. Cohen, with the assistance of Roger Lancelyn Green (Macmillan, 1979, p. 62), henceforth called *Letters*.
5 *The Brothers Dalziel* by George and Edward Dalziel (Methuen, 1901, p. 128).
6 *Illustrators*, p. 246.
7 *Letters*, p. 561.
8 *Illustrators*, p. 321.
9 *Illustrators*, p. 114.
10 *Illustrators*, pp. 68-69.
11 *Illustrators*, p. 130.
12 *Illustrators*, p. 63.
13 *Illustrators*, p. 167.
14 *Illustrators*, p. 169.
15 *Illustrators*, p. 208.
16 *Illustrators*, p. 132.
17 *Sir John Tenniel*, by Frances Sarzano (Art and Technics, 1948, p. 16).
18 *Illustrators*, p. 53.
19 *Illustrators*, p. 238.
20 *Illustrators*, p. 279.
21 *Illustrators*, pp. 259-260.